

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 NEA-09 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01

INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 ACDA-05 OMB-01 SAM-01 EB-07 COME-00 TRSE-00

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R 101632Z FEB 75

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8096

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

AMEMBASSY SANAA

AMEMBASSY DOHA

AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

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BEIRUT PASS BAGHDAD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, MARR, MASS, MU, UK

SUBJECT: PRESS REPORT ON AMERICAN PRESENCE IN OMAN

1. VETERAN TIMES CORRESPONDENT A. M. RENDEL HAS ARTICLE FILED FROM MUSCAT IN FEBRUARY 7 ISSUE ENTITLED: "WHY THE AMERICANS MUST TREAD QUIETLY IN THIS SENSITIVE CORNER OF ARABIA." RENDEL (WHO NORMALLY IS VERY CLOSE TO BRITISH ESTABLISHMENT AND ALSO CHECKS OUT HIS STORIES WITH EMBASSY HERE BEFORE PRINTING THEM) HAS PEGGED HIS LINE ON PROBABILITY OF INCREASED US PRESENCE. RELEVANT EXCERPTS--INCLUDING REFERENCE TO LANDING RIGHTS IN

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MOSENDAM PENINSULA (WHICH IS DIFFERENT FROM MASIRAH

ISLAND)--FOLLOW. (COMMENT: WE SHALL BE SEEING RENDEL ON HIS RETURN HERE AND WILL MAKE A POINT OF SETTING HIM RIGHT ON US POLICY TOWARD OMAN.)

2. "THE AMERICANS HAVE DECIDED THAT THEY MUST BE ABLE TO ENSURE FREE PASSAGE THROUGH THE 20-MILE-WIDE STRAITS OF KHORMUZ FOR THE 200 TANKERS THAT PASS EACH DAY CARRYING OIL OF ARABIA AND IRAN TO WORLD MARKETS--MUCH OF IT TO AMERICA."

3. "THERE ARE PERSISTENT REPORTS HERE THAT THE AMERICANS HAVE ASKED SULTAN QABOOS BIN SAID FOR LANDING RIGHTS IN THE MOSENDAM PENINSULA AT THE EXTREME NORTHERN TIP OF THE OMANI TERRITORY. THE BRITISH REPRESENTATIVES HERE SAY THE SULTAN WOULD ACCEPT AMERICA'S REQUEST FOR CREWS OF UNITED STATES SHIPS TO GO ASHORE THERE. SUCH A REQUEST, LIKE THE RECENT UNITED STATES REQUEST TO SHARE THE USE THAT PART OF MASIRAH ISLAND LEASED BY BRITAIN, CAN BE DEFENDED AS PART OF THE UNITED STATES POLICY OF AN INCREASING NAVAL PRESENCE IN THE INDIAN OCEAN AS A COUNTERWEIGHT TO THE SOVIET NAVY..."

4. "NOR WOULD AMERICANS ALLOW THEMSELVES TO BECOME INVOLVED IN LAND OPERATIONS IN DHOFAR WHERE THE SULTAN'S ARMY COMMANDED BY 350 BRITISH SECONDED OR CONTRACT OFFICERS HAS GRADUALLY EXPANDED THE SULTAN'S SWAY FROM THE IMMEDIATE VICINITY OF HIS PALACE ON SALALAH WATERFRONT FOUR YEARS AGO INTO A SECURE OCCUPATION OF THE WHOLE COASTAL PLAIN."

5. "NATURALLY AMERICAN PRESSURE ON THE SULTAN FOR MORE CONTRACTS WILL INCREASE. THE CONTRACT TO RUN THE AIRPORT HAS ALREADY BEEN GIVEN AT THE LAST MOMENT TO PANAM--REPORTEDLY AT TWICE THE COST OF A BID BY THE COMPETING BRITISH COMPANY. BUT THE RAPIER AND JAGUAR AIR DEFENSE SYSTEM ON WHICH THE SULTAN WAS DETERMINED AS A PRESTIGE SYMBOL TO MATCH EXTRAVAGANCE BY NEIGHBORING STATES, HAS RECENTLY BEEN SIGNED AND BRITISH FEARS OF

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UNDUE AMERICAN POLITICAL PRESSURE MAY BE EXAGGERATED."

6. "MEANWHILE AMERICAN OBSERVERS SUGGEST THAT THE BRITISH HAVE BEEN DRAGGING THEIR FEET IN THE DHOFAR FIGHTING AND IN OMANIZATION OF THE OMANI FORCES IN ORDER TO PROLONG THEIR OWN COMMANDING POSITION, AND THAT BRITAIN HAVING NO LONGER A DIRECT PART IN THE OVERALL DEFENSE OF THE INDIAN OCEAN, IS PROLONGING HER PRESENCE IN OMAN FOR TRADE AND FINANCIAL ADVANTAGES TO HERSELF IN THE GULF AREA."

7. "THESE CONFLICTING ANGLO-AMERICAN ATTITUDES SHOULD
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HOWEVER BE RECONCILABLE IF THE AMERICANS ARE PREPARED TO INCREASE THEIR PRESENCE GRADUALLY AND QUIETLY. A SEN-

SIBLE SHARING OF THE USE OF MASIRAH WHICH FOR BRITAIN IS
LARGELY NOW AN UNDEREMPLOYED STAGING POST, SHOULD BE
NEGOTIABLE. CLEARLY IT IS IN THE INTEREST OF THE UNITED
STATES, BRITAIN AND OMAN TO AVOID JEOPARDIZING THE AC-
QUIESCENCE OF OMAN'S ARAB NEIGHBORS IN THE CURRENT DEFENSE
ARRANGEMENTS BY ADVERTISING AND EXAGGERATING THE SPEED
AND EXTENT OF THE BUILDUP OF THE AMERICAN PRESENCE. BUT
EVENTUALLY THE AMERICAN PRESENCE SEEMS CERTAIN TO IN-
CREASE GREATLY HERE IN YEARS AHEAD."

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